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Set out below is the text of the statement made in parliament on 22 August by the Prime Minister, the Honourable R.J. Hawke, on Australia's recognition of the sovereignty of Indonesia over the province of East Timor.

Mr HAWKE - I sincerely thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. In an interview I gave on 25 July, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the independence of Indonesia, I said: "We recognise the sovereign authority of Indonesia". I go back a little before the date mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition. In December 1978 the now Leader of the Opposition in his then capacity as Foreign Minister stated that Australia would recognise Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor and that de jure recognition took effect, as he said, in February of 1979. It is important to note that it has not been revoked by any subsequent Government.

I remind the House that recognition of the fact of Indonesian control over East Timor has been repeatedly demonstrated over the last several years. Let me illustrate that. Australian delegations, including parliamentary delegations, have obtained Indonesian permission to visit East Timor. So have representatives of the Australian media. The Australian Government has pursued human rights and aid issues in East Timor through the Indonesian Government. The very important family reunion program from East Timor was agreed to by the Indonesian Government.

If I may pick up the point specifically alluded to by the Leader of the Opposition, it is the case that the negotiations between Australia and Indonesia over the unresolved seabed boundary adjacent to East Timor have continued with the Indonesian Government. These negotiations,

the successful conclusion of which is of great importance to Australia, can in practice be concluded only with the Indonesian Government. Having said those things, I add that the Government has expressed to Indonesia its concern at the way East Timor was incorporated. It has raised and will continue to raise the question of human rights in East Timor. It has sought free access for the media, for international organisations and aid workers to East Timor, and it has supported international initiatives to settle the Timor problem, including extensive discussions with the United Nations Secretary-General, Indonesia and Portugal.

I understand that the Portuguese Ambassador suggested today on Australian media that my statement has undermined Portugal's efforts to reach a settlement of the problem with Indonesia. My friend and colleague the Minister for Foreign Affairs has indicated to me that the Portuguese Ambassador has advised that no official Portuguese statement has been made on a connection between any withdrawal and what has been said.

Let me emphasise this point: The legal fact that Australia has since 1979 recognised Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor has not previously hindered either our ability or Portuguese ability to seek a settlement of this problem. I see no reason why a statement by me of that legal fact now should in any way change the situation.